

THE *Deacon Servant*

OFFICES OF DEACON SERVICES | DIACONATE FORMATION | ARCHDIOCESE of MILWAUKEE



ARCHDIOCESE of MILWAUKEE
DIACONATE
Where love becomes service.

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DIRECTOR'S REPORT



Dcn. Mike Chmielewski

New Year Blessings to all in our Deacon Family!

We enter the new year with the hopeful anticipation of blessings and new ways to experience our God's presence. Our God is a God of surprises and no doubt 2022 will be full of

his surprise gifts.

In 2021, one of God's surprise gifts for our deacon family was his call to eternal life for 11 deacons (two of whom chose to end their diaconal ministry years ago) and five wives. The overall number of deaths from our family is higher than most years. In my six years as director, we have averaged four to five deacon and wife deaths each year. In addition, many of us celebrated the end of the earthly life journey of parent, child, sibling or other loved ones.

Death is one of the great mysteries of life. It is inevitable for all of us, as none will escape physical death. It is a time of great sadness but our faith reminds us that it is part of our journey of life. We pray in the Funeral Rite, "Life is changed, not ended." Because of our faith, we gather in hope and the confidence of eternal life, which allows us to celebrate earthly life in all its brevity.



The custom here in Milwaukee is to celebrate the life of a deacon or wife as a family. We remember their gift to both the Church and the diaconate. Many of us connect individually with the grieving family through cards, calls or visits. However, I want to remind you of the power of community. Our Catholic Funeral Rites offer tremendous opportunity to celebrate and support as community. As deacon, we often lead this celebration of hope.

As I have walked with these many families in 2021, albeit ever so briefly, I have seen and heard the tremendous appreciation of our presence and prayers. I hear the gratitude at the services and afterwards in thank you notes, phone calls or email messages. The pastors and parish staff who host a deacon funeral are truly touched by the outpouring of deacon support and presence.

At the nine deacon funerals and three wife funerals I attended, we had deacon representation as large as 30 and as small as two. Some of our funeral prayer attendance was limited by the virus, but even then special care was extended to include a strong deacon presence. No matter the numbers, the grieving family and parish were most appreciative of our presence.

I want to take this opportunity to remind

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(continued on page 2)

SHOULD WE ENCOURAGE BEGINNING DIACONAL FORMATION AT AN EARLIER AGE?



Deacon Dale Nees

My response to this question is most certainly – yes! In fact, I would go as far as to suggest that we should never discourage beginning discussion of a diaconal vocation early. Rationale for this position is that delaying has been part of a pattern that manifests itself as an aging permanent diaconate and contributes to the eventual decline in the number of deacons actively

serving the people of God. It appears that statistical highlights from The Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate at Georgetown University in Washington, DC “A Portrait of the Permanent Diaconate: A Study for the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops 2020-2021” would support this:

- “During the 2020 calendar year, 587 new permanent deacons were ordained in responding dioceses. At the same time, 410 deacons retired from active ministry and another 378 died. As is the case with priests in the United States, **there are not enough new permanent deacons being ordained to make up for the numbers who are retiring from active ministry and dying each year.**
- Ninety-five percent of active permanent deacons are at least 50 years old. About a fifth (21%) are in their 50s, two-fifths (40%) are in their 60s, and two-fifths (35%) are 70 or older.”¹

In other words, not only has there been a net decrease, but also 75% of active permanent deacons are age 60 or older. Healthy discussions that promote beginning formation sooner than our most recent Archdiocesan mean age of 51-52 years

old would clearly be very practical. Another obvious result from starting formation at a younger age would be more years of active ministry, perhaps by as much as a decade.

But the benefit goes beyond sheer numbers and service to others. Fostering the vocation of a deacon at a younger age would welcome a life of meaning versus other alternatives he may feel he has to choose from. Rather it provides an invitation instead to be someone who pursues the possibility that he is chosen. We know that “A man’s diaconal formation can be a gift in the life of his family, providing it with an opportunity to explore together the meaning of discipleship, the Church, and the vocations of marriage and Holy Orders. It can strengthen the bonds between parents and their children through prayer, communication and shared virtue. It can be a powerful experience of community, service and compassion.”² The benefits to marriage and family have been well studied and documented since the restoration.

Subsequently, if the need exists and the family experience of deacons is positive, why would we hesitate to plant the seeds of vocational discernment earlier? I do not pretend to have the answer, but we can remedy it by simply charting a new course that recognizes maturity. All it would require is continuing in the spirit of the Second Vatican Council by practicing “novus habitus mentis” or “a new way of thinking.”

¹The Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate, “A Portrait of the Permanent Diaconate: A Study for the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops 2020-2021” (Georgetown University: Washington, DC), 2

²United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, “The National Directory for the Formation, Ministry, and Life of Permanent Deacons in the United States of America second edition” (USCCB: 2021), 83 no.152.

Deacon Dale Nees

► DIRECTOR’S REPORT *(continued from page 1)*

you all of the powerful impact we have at the funeral prayer of our deacon family. Where we are as a deacon community and ministerial presence in the Archdiocese began in 1975 with the ordination of 31 men to the permanent diaconate. Every class since then continues to build on the classes of 1977, 78, 79, 81, and so forth. As a deacon community, we owe gratitude to all who have made the diaconate what it is today. Often the only way we can say thank you is to help celebrate the earthly journey, support the grieving family and help lift them to eternal life at the funeral prayer.

I do understand that there are many practical challenges to attending the funeral prayer of a deacon or wife. However, may I remind you that “not knowing them” is never an acceptable excuse. You do know them! They are deacon or deacon wife. They are brother / sister. They are co ministers and proclaimers of the Good News! Whether the prayer happens in Milwaukee, Kenosha, Fox Lake, Grafton, Muskego, Sheboygan Falls, Brookfield, Hartford or anywhere else in the Archdiocese, we are invited to celebrate the great gift of discipleship and diaconate and the wonder of God’s surprises.

Deacon Michael Chmielewski

“CONNECTING THE DOTS”



*Dcn. Manuel
Maldonado-
Villalobos*

Time flies fast. It has now been four months since I received the blessing of being ordained as a servant of the Church, as a deacon. I want to take this opportunity to reflect humbly on this experience.

In formation, we have always said, “trust the process” and that there is going to be a moment where we can “connect the dots”. To get to the order of deacons, I had to go from formator to candidate,

from teacher to student. It was a challenge to wear two hats. However, at the same time it was a blessing. Now I was the one listening to the words of the formators. Moreover, I was able to “practice what I preached.” I also went through the challenges and requirements, through sleepless nights and stress – and more than that, through the support and brotherhood of my classmates. The formation was at the time, and I say it with humility, a path of roses and thorns; I am happy to have passed through it because I could see the value of the formation program and the sacrifices that go into it. I do not want to be misunderstood when I speak of challenges, because thanks to those moments of grace and learning, I was able to reach the altar and be ordained.

There I was, Sept. 11, 2021, with my parents and in front of the Archbishop receiving the Sacrament of Holy Orders as Deacon, another moment when I was the one who was disoriented and did not know what to do. I was not the

formator who explained to the candidates, who are now my brother deacons, what had to be done in ordination rite. I was the scared and nervous candidate who needed instructions so as not to get lost. It was a day full of emotions, but even more joy, for having received the Sacrament accompanied by my parents, my brothers, family and friends. Yes, it has been four months now.

Four months “connecting the dots.” I have already had the opportunity to baptize, assist at Mass, preach and give blessings for sweet fifteen. I have also had the opportunity to instruct and guide my brothers and sisters who come asking for clarification to the faith, advice or a word of encouragement, because now, I am “the deacon.” It is in these moments of service that I am reminded of the “why” of formation. These are the times, the moments, where theology, spirituality and ministry classes make sense. It is in these moments where the long hours of practicing the sacraments, rites and preaching make sense. It is these experiences that make me discover that formation is worth it, and that sacrifices and sleepless nights have their reward.

I still have much more to learn. I have to keep growing in knowledge, practices and service. However, by “connecting the dots”, I thank God for he has put me in the place of service/ministry he has planned for me. Trust the process, which is led by the Holy Spirit, and at the end, when we connect the dots, we can say “this makes sense”.

Dcn. Manuel Maldonado-Villalobos

WELCOME DCN. JIM MATTHIAS



*Dcn. Jim
Matthias*

Welcome to Dcn. Jim Matthias. He has been hired to serve as director of Respect Life Ministries and director of Prison and Jail Ministries. He previously served as operations manager at Pro-Life Wisconsin and as operations manager at SET Ministry in Milwaukee. Jim was ordained a deacon for the Archdiocese in 2018 and is assigned to St. Sebastian/St.

Catherine Parishes in Milwaukee.

Dcn. Jim will be working with individuals and groups, priests, deacons and laypersons in both ministries to coordinate

efforts and see how the Archdiocese can better meet the needs of those involved in these ministries and the people they serve. His focus will be on helping the Archdiocese develop a more vibrant culture of life starting at the parish level, protecting the most vulnerable in our society and coordinating care for those incarcerated in the 10 counties of the archdiocese.

If you are involved in either of these ministries, please reach out to Dcn. Jim so you can be part of the improvement process. He can be reached at 414-769-3454 or email him at MatthiasJ@ArchMil.org

THE WIVES' PROGRAM—TRANSFORMATION OF LOVE



Maritza Espino

“Love is the condition in which the happiness of another person is essential to your own.” ~St. Therese of Calcutta

We had the privilege to close the fall trimester with a Wives' Gathering Celebration in which wives of ordained deacons came and shared their personal experiences as a wife of an ordained deacon. Candidate Year I and III wives

were delighted to listen to their witness and their advice as they shared in small groups. (See picture to the right)

The second edition of the “National Directory for the Formation, Ministry, and Life of Permanent Deacons” affirms the importance of family perspective. “Individuals do not enter into formation alone. Those who participate in diaconal formation, married or unmarried, come with their families. They come as members of a family, known as the ‘domestic church,’ where life is shared and nurtured. They come from that primary community, where God is first discovered and known, and enter into a new wider community that can expand their love and deepen their faith. They come with their experiences of faith and personal life.” (# 146) In fact, later on in the next paragraph it re-affirms that “a man cannot be considered for the diaconate without the consent of his wife.” (# 148) Consequently, the wives' formation is essential in order to support their husband's vocation and demands of their formation as they continue through the different stages of their vocation.

Working with the wives of the candidates, I have been able to witness their spiritual growth. They become small communities in which they accompany each other. The emotional and spiritual support among them is evident. I have been able to witness their transformation. Some will share that the formation they have received here, has enhanced their marriage and their



relationships with their loved ones. It is fascinating to hear this, but most important to witness it. It is evident God is at work!

St. John Paul II in his “Letter to Women” published on June 29, 1995, expresses the gratitude towards women who embrace different roles and yet remain faithful to their vocation, to their marriage. “Thank you women who are mothers! You have sheltered human beings within yourselves in a unique experience of joy and travail. This experience makes you become God's own smile upon the newborn child. The one who guides your child's first steps, who helps it to grow, and who is the anchor as the child makes its way along the journey of life. Thank you, women who are wives! You irrevocably join your future to that of your husbands, in a relationship of mutual giving, at the service of love and life. Thank you, women who are daughters and women who are sisters! Into the heart of the family, and then of all society, you bring the richness of your sensitivity, your intuitiveness, and your generosity and fidelity.” (# 2)

Our Diaconate Formation Program is grateful to all women that responded out of love and much discernment to their husband's vocation to the diaconate. We are grateful for their patience, wisdom and generous heart as they journey with their husbands to become servants of Christ in today's society. Thank YOU!

Maritza Espino

DEACON SENATE

The Deacon Senate met Wednesday Nov. 17, 2021 via zoom. Deacons present: Starke, Wiese, Petrie, Campbell, Paczkowski, Matthias, Jansen, Gundlach, Nees, Schneider and Chmielewski. Dcn. Schneider began the meeting with prayer. Anne Haines, director of St. Bakhita Catholic Worker House, then shared her mission and vision for this new ministry in Milwaukee. Located on North Second Street just north of Burleigh in the former Capuchin St. Conrad House, Bakhita House will offer services for women escaping sex trafficking. Franciscan Peacemakers

ministry (directed by Dcn. Steve Przedpelski '94) will be a partner and shared resident of the building. The grand opening is scheduled for Feb. 8, 2022. One can visit their website for more details: bakhitahouse.org.

The meeting continued with approval of the September 2021 Meeting Minutes. Dcn. Campbell then offered the financial report, including a balance of \$10,632.09 following the

► See DEACON SENATE (continued on page 5)

REST IN PEACE

† **Dcn. Richard J. Govek** died November 22, 2021. Dcn. Govek was born June 11, 1934, in Sheboygan. He graduated from Sheboygan Central High in 1952. He attended Marquette (1952-54) studying engineering and then finished his college studies at UWM (1959-60) studying accounting. He served his country in the U.S. Army (1957-59), with an honorable discharge as a Spec 5. He began his work career as a clerk for the FBI (1952-62), but his true professional career was as a material manager for Wisconsin Electric from 1962-94.

Dcn. Govek married the love of his life, Dorothy, Oct. 20, 1956, at SS. Cyril & Methodius Parish in Sheboygan. They had seven children: Elizabeth (Rollin) Kring, Margaret (Ron) Wollner, Andrew (Margaret), Richard (Carrie), Edward (Janice), Amy (Rick) Green and Joanne (Kraig) Sadownikow. He is also survived by 29 grandchildren and four great grand children. His beloved Dorothy died December 7, 2020.

Dcn. Govek began his diaconate formation in 1988 at St. Francis de Sales Seminary. He was ordained a permanent deacon June 13, 1992, by Archbishop Rembert G. Weakland O.S.B., in Mater Christi Chapel. Dcn. Govek was assigned to his home parish, St. Joseph, Grafton, where he served until his official retirement on June 30, 2009. In addition to the traditional liturgical services, Dcn. Govek's true passion was jail ministry. Prior to ordination, Dcn. Govek was serving at the Ozaukee County Jail, but after ordination he served 20-40 hours per month there. He also served the deacon community as a district rep and a member of the Deacon Council.

Funeral services for Dcn. Govek occurred Saturday Nov. 27, 2021. There was visitation 9 a.m.-11 a.m. with the Mass of Christian Burial at 11 a.m. at St. Joseph Parish, Grafton. Fr. Steve Lampe, assisting priest and a former pastor at St. Joseph Parish, was the presider and the homilist. The Deacon of the Word was Dcn. Paul Govek, Dcn. Richard's brother from Oklahoma, while the Deacon of the Altar was Dcn. Al Lazaga from St. Joseph's (and an ordination classmate of Dcn. Govek).

Bishop James Schuerman offered the Final Commendation. Fifteen deacons and wives gathered to pray with the family. May He Rest in Peace!

† **Dcn. Richard D. Hiller** died on November 29, 2021. Dcn. Hiller was born February 18, 1936, in Beaver Dam. He graduated from Hartford High in 1955. He attended some college at St. Lawrence Seminary 1955-56, and also spent some time as a Camillian brother. Professionally, Dcn. Hiller was employed in Hartford area nursing and extended care facilities for more than 30 years. He worked as an orderly, an aide in nursing, dietary and social work and eventually as a certified Catholic chaplain.

Dcn. Hiller never married. He lived in the family home in Hartford for his whole life. He is survived by four sisters and a brother, multiple in-laws, and numerous nieces and nephews.

Dcn. Hiller began his diaconate formation in 1974 at St. Francis de Sales Seminary. He was ordained a permanent deacon Dec. 26, 1975, by Archbishop William E. Cousins at the Cathedral of St. John the Evangelist as part of Milwaukee's first class of permanent deacons. He was assigned to his home parish, St. Kilian, Hartford, where he served until his retirement from covenanted diaconal service December 2, 1994. He continued to serve, as his health allowed, even in retirement. In addition to normal liturgical service, Dcn. Hiller's passion was services to the elderly, those in long term care and the homebound. He completed training as a chaplain and was certified by the United States Catholic Conference in March 1976.

Funeral services for Dcn. Hiller were held Tuesday Dec. 7, 2021. There was a visitation starting at 10 a.m. at the Shimon Funeral Home in Hartford. The Mass of Christian Burial began at noon at St. Kilian Church, Hartford. Fr. Britto Suresh, pastor at St. Kilian, was the main celebrant, with Fr. David LaPlante

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► DEACON SENATE (continued from page 4)

completion of 3 major events this fall (Deacon Day, Retreat and Memorial Mass). A few checks have yet to clear and we have only one major event scheduled in this fiscal year (Deacon Day 2022-May 7, 2022.) Overall, we are in good financial shape.

Dcn. Nees followed with his Formation Report indicating that 16 men continue as third-year candidates and 13 as first year candidates. A new class will begin turning in applications in January with some schedule adjustments made to assure the next class is accepted by June 9, 2022. It is on that date that the

revised National Directory will take effect, which will require an additional year of aspirancy formation.

District reports followed and then general discussion and review of Deacon Day, Memorial Mass and Retreat. The general reaction to the events was very positive and overall event participation was very good with 80 plus at both Deacon Day and Memorial Mass and 50 plus on the Retreat. The meeting ended with prayer at 7 p.m. and the next Senate Meeting scheduled for Jan. 19, 2022.

Dcn. Mike Chmielewski

KNOW OUR DEACON

Dcn. Roberto Fuentes was born and raised in Laredo, Texas. As a teen he joined the work force as a migrant worker because his family needed the financial support. After a number of years of seasonal work in Wisconsin fields and canning factories, Roberto decided to set his roots in Racine. He was able to land a job at J.I. Case where he worked for 30 years. He met his wife Lorenza at Case and they have been married more than 50 years with three children, nine grandchildren, and 13 great grandchildren.

Roberto was ordained a deacon in 2002 and has served at Cristo Rey and St. Patrick Parishes in Racine. His true passion has been jail/prison ministry as well as care of those recently released from prison. He received the Vatican II Award in 1997 for Service to the Church. He has been an active leader



Dcn. Roberto Fuentes and wife Lorenza.

in Hispanic Ministry in the Archdiocese. He also helped mentor men in the Deacon Formation Program.

I visited Dcn. Roberto and Lorenza at their home in late November. Roberto spends most of his day caring for Lorenza, who cannot be left alone due to her struggles with dementia. Roberto's devotion as husband and the current pandemic have significantly limited his ability to serve as deacon. However, his coffee table was filled with Bible class

materials that he sends to prisoners across the country. He continues his mission of caring for the imprisoned in a very unique way.

Thank you Dcn. Roberto for all you have done and continue to do for God's people.

Dcn. Mike Chmielewski

► REST IN PEACE *(continued from page 5)*

and Fr. Michael Petrie (both former pastors at St. Kilian) concelebrating. Dcn. Mike Chmielewski assisted at the altar. Fr. Britto preached at the Mass and offered both his and the parish appreciation for Dcn. Hiller's diaconal service. Dcn. Hiller was laid to rest in the St. Kilian Parish Cemetery in a combined committal service for him and his sister Geraldine, who died Nov. 21, 2021.

May He Rest in Peace!

✠ **Dcn. David R. Pollak** died Nov. 4, 2021. Dcn. Pollak was born January 19, 1945, in Oshkosh. He graduated from Pulaski High in Milwaukee in 1963 and shortly after entered the U. S. Army. He served his country from 1963 until his honorable discharge in 1966 as a Spec 4 with a special assignment as a Hawk Missile Tech. Upon discharge from the Army, Dcn. Pollak established himself in a career as a service technician for Sears Roebuck where he worked for 35 years.

Dcn. Pollak married the love of his life, Kathleen, June 10, 1967, at Holy Spirit (now St. Raphael) Church in Milwaukee. They had four children: Denise, David (Amy), Pam Farnworth, and Mark (Angie). Kathleen died on March 30, 2007. Dcn. Pollak is also survived by eight grandchildren, a brother, and numerous in-laws, nieces, nephews and friends.

Dcn. Pollak began his diaconate formation in 1992 at St.

Francis de Sales Seminary. He was ordained a permanent deacon June 1, 1996, by Bishop Richard Sklba in Mater Christi Chapel. Dcn. Pollak was initially assigned to serve at his home parish, Holy Spirit, where he served until 2000. In 2000 he was assigned to serve at St. Charles Borromeo until he left active ministry in 2008. After Kathleen's death in 2007, Dcn. Pollak faced numerous personal, family and diaconal challenges. He took time off from diaconal service, attempted to return to covenanted service, but eventually retired from diaconal service in May of 2012. In addition to the usual liturgical services, Dcn. Pollak had special interests in teaching and ministering at local nursing homes. He also served the deacon community as a Senate rep and a member of the Deacon Personnel Board.

The Mass of Christian Burial for Dcn. Pollak took place Nov. 10, 2021, at St. Charles Borromeo Parish. Fr. Brian Holbus, pastor at St. Charles, was the presider. He was joined at the altar by Dcn. Wilson Shierk, classmate, and Dcn. Stan Lowe, a close friend, who proclaimed the Gospel and preached. Dcn. Stan highlighted the life of service that Dcn. Pollak lived to his family, his country, his profession and his Church. Seventeen deacons and wives prayed with the family at the Mass. Dcn. Pollak was laid to rest along side his wife, Kathleen, at Mt. Olivet Cemetery.

May He Rest in Peace!

Prayer Requests

Kathy Marx, wife of Dcn. Keith `07

Dcn. Al Lazaga `92

Barbara Zozakiewicz, widow of
Dcn. Dan `94

Dcn. Troy Major `02

Antoinette D'Alessio, wife of
Dcn. John `98

Dcn. Don Borkowski `81

Karen Hayes, widow of
Dcn. Steve `04

Dcn. Tom Filipiak `94

Dcn. Al Foeckler `07

Dcn. Roberto Fuentes `02
and wife Lorenza

Mary Hiller, sister of late
Dcn. Richard `75

Dcn. Patrick Moynihan `01

Dcn. Gerry Ponec `81

RECENTLY DECEASED AND THEIR FAMILIES

Dcn. David R. Pollak `96, 11/4/2021

Dcn. Richard J. Govek `92,
11/22/2021

Barbara Campbell, mother of Dcn.
Scott `05

Dcn. Richard Hiller `75, 11/29/2021

Mary (Derks) Klister, mother of
Dcn. Bob Derks `14



DATES TO REMEMBER

March 26, 2022

Women's Day of Reflection, 8 a.m.-1p.m.
Maritza Espino, MMCPCC

May 7, 2022

Deacon Day 2022, 8 a.m.-1 p.m.
St. Thomas Aquinas, Waterford
Stephanie Delmore presenting /
Fr. Herda (& successor) presiding

May 14, 2022

Post Ordination Formation, Session 2,
Class 2020, 8 a.m.-2 p.m, MMCPCC

September 10, 2022

Diaconate Ordination, 10 a.m.
Cathedral St. John the Evangelist

October 23, 2022

Memorial Mass 2022, Archbishop Listecki,
District 14/15/16 planning.

November 3-6, 2022

Deacon Retreat / Redemptorist, Fr. Rob
Kroll, S.J.



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